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ABSTRACT

This manual is designed to help parents facilitate their children's language development. It is divided into five sections based on different levels of language development that extend from children's early use of sounds to their production of four and five word sentences. Each section contains a brief general description of children's speech and language, suggestions on how to talk to children and what to talk to them about, and finally, some activities to stimulate children's speech and language usage. (Author/MP)

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TALKING WITH YOUR CHIID

A Manual for Parents

by

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Dear Parents,

This manual is designed to help you encourage your child's language development. It is divided into five sections based on different levels of language development, from the early use of sounds to the production of four and five word sentences. Each section contains a brief general description of children's speech and language for each level and suggestions for what to toak about, how to talk about it, and some activities to stimulate your child's speech and language usage. We suggest that you concentrate on that section of the manual which seems to describe best your child's present level of language development. The suggestions within this section are meant to serve as general guidelines, not hard and fast rules. We hope you will find these guidelines helpful in talking with your child every day.

The Authors

THE CHILD WHO USES ONLY SOUNDS

I. Your Child's Language

In this stage of language development, your child uses sounds which may not be recognized as meaningful adult-like words (for example, "baba," "gaga"). These sounds will be spoken in a variety of patterns and will be used to express different needs, desires, and emotions. Your child may be "playing" with these sounds, perhaps in imitation of your sounds.

It is important for you to recognize that these sounds are purposeful for your child and are meant to influence your reactions to him; for example, you can tell whether your child is happy or uncomfortable by his sounds and accompanying gestures.

While your child is in this phase, he may not understand the words which you say to him, although he may realize what you mean from how you say it. "No, no!", for example, will usually be understood by your child by the way you increase your loudness and stress.

Your child is able to recognize familiar faces and voices and he will often smile when he hears you, even if you are out of his sight.

II. What You Should Talk About

Talk about what your child can see, touch and hear: for example, familiar toys, people, objects.

Talk about what you are doing as you are doing it: for example, eating, bathing, playing.

III. How You Should Talk to Your Child

Your child needs to know that you are talking to him and not someone else:

Use your child's name frequently.

Make your voice a little higher.

Stress important words: for example, "See daddy".

Speak a little more slowly than you do to adults and older children.

Your child needs to understand that speech is a shared activity:

Use the names of people and objects you're referring to rather than using pronouns such as "he", "she", "it", etc.

Use short simple sentences and speak at a slower rate than you would to an adult.

IV. Suggested Activities

Talk to your child as you carry out familiar activities: for example, when your child is having his bath:

Father (washing child): "Julie, we're going to get all nice and clean for mommy".

Child: "Mommy."

Father: "Yes, mommy will be home soon. Umm, doesn't that feel good? (washing Julie's stomach).

Child: "Malaba".

Father: "We're almost done. Look out, here comes the water (rinsing her hair)".

Explore the outside environment with your child and describe things that are new to him.

Look at picture books with your child and talk about the pictures. For example:

Parent (pointing to picture): "Look at the cow. The cow says moo".

Child: "Moo-moo".

Parent: "That's right, cow says moo".

Parent (points to another animal): "Oh what's this?" (Parent waits for a moment and the child doesn't answer):

Parent: "Andy, that's a dog".

The length of time you spend looking at a book will depend on your child's interest level.

Play action games with your child: for example, roll a ball back and forth; "Pat-a-Cake", "Peek-a-Boo", and "So Big", and speak the words of the game as you are playing it.

Imitate sounds that are interesting to your child: for example, make noises like familiar animals, the wind, the telephone, a car.

THE CHILD WHO USES SINGLE WORDS

I. Your Child's Language

In this stage of language development, your child will learn and use the words which are most important to him. The first words he uses may include names for familiar people, objects, and activities (e.g. Mama, Dada, ball, Teddy, drink, cookie, more, all gone, bye-bye). Later, the child will begin to expand his vocabulary by adding more and more words to express his needs, desires, and emotions (e.g. Instead of saying "shoe", the child may now say "boot", "shoe", or "sneaker.").

Early Single Word Stage: Your child is just beginning to use a few words to name objects, people, and activities that he recognizes. He may use one word to name many different things; e.g., he may use "dog" to name many animals other than dogs. One word may be used to express different meanings. "Door" may mean "close the door", "open the door", "that's a door", or even "I want to go out." In addition, your child may use words that are not recognizable to you, but do have meaning for him. For example, your child may use a "nonsense" word rather than a name he can't pronounce, e.g., "Og" for "Roger".

At this stage of language development, your child is usually able to understand familiar words and gestures. He may now wave and say "Bye" after you've waved goodbye.

Later Single Word Stage: Your child is now beginning to sort out differences in his world and is able to use more specific names for objects, people, toys, and animals. For example, dogs will be called "dog" and cats will be called "kitty". It will be easier for your child to communicate because he will use both gestures and words to express his needs and desires, e.g., he will say "cookie" as he reaches for the cookie. It is still important to realize that although you may not always understand everything your child has said, his words do have meaning for him. For instance, he may say "Ninaw" for "grandma".

Your child is able to understand much of what is said to him. As a general rule, he probably understands more words than he uses. He may not understand many sentences, but he will respond appropriately because he understands some of the most important words in the sentence. For instance, the child will carry out the command "Take the ball to Daddy," because he recognizes "ball" and "Daddy".

II. What You Should Talk About

Talk about what your child can see, touch and hear: for example, talk about a butterfly he sees, some keys he is playing with, the telephone he hears ringing.

Talk about what your child shows an interest in; for example:

Child (pointing to cup): "Mommy. Cup".

Mother: "That's right, Andy. That's a cup".

Child (holding cup): "cup".

Mother: "What is it? Do you want a drink?"

Child (following mother into kitchen): "Ju".

Mother: "Oh, ok. You'd like some juice".

Child (smiles).

Mother: "Look Andy, Mommy is pouring juice into your cup. There you go. (cup is given to child) Here's your juice".

Talk about what you're doing as you're doing it: for example, if you are stacking blocks together, you might say, "Mommy put a block on", as you add one. When your child stacks one, you could say, "You put one on".

Talk about emotions and physical states: for example, describe how you feel ("Mommy is happy".); describe how your child seems to feel ("Are you hungry?").

III. How you Should Talk

Your child needs to understand that speech is a shared activity:

Ask questions you know your child can answer: for example, "What is this?" "Do you want___?" "Where is___?"

Allow time for your child to respond. Say the word for the child if he is unable to.

Listen to your child when he talks with you, and praise his attempts to communicate.

Your child needs to learn to understand what you're saying:

Increase the number of different words that you use: for example, instead of calling all liquids "drink", ask "Do you want juice? milk? water?".

Whenever possible, point to the objects and people you are talking about.

Look directly at your child when speaking to him.

Imitate your child's speech sounds.

Wait for your child to respond to your speech.

Use physical contact when speaking with your child.

Your child needs to learn the meaning of what you're talking about:

Use common vocabulary words.

Use shorter and simpler sentences: for example, say "Drink your milk" instead of "Do you think you can finish all your milk?".

Use gestures to go along with what you say. You might wave as you say "bye-bye" or point to an object as you name it.

Remember to describe what you or your child is doing as you're doing it. For example, in two familiar situations:

Lunchtime

Mother (pouring milk):	"Look Andy. Mommy is getting your milk".
Child (seated at table):	"Ma-ma-ma".
Mother (handing milk to child):	"That's right. Mama poured your milk. Here it is, Andy, Umm, it looks good".

Bedtime

Father:	"Here are your pajamas. Andy, let's put your pajamas on".
Child:	"Ooo goy".
Father:	(as he dresses child): "Oh boy? You like getting into your pajamas, don't you? Put your foot in. Ooops, where's your toe? There it is".
Child (giggling):	"Foot".

Father (pulling shirt over baby's head): "Where's Andy? I can't see him. Something's moving. Ooops! Peek-a-boo!"

Father (hugs Andy)

IV. Suggested Activities

Talk to your child as you carry out your daily routines: for example, while you're feeding and dressing him; during shopping trips; when you're bathing and getting him ready for bed.

Play simple games with your child: for example, "Peek-a-Boo"; "Upsy-Daisy"; "Pat-a-Cake".

Playfully imitate the sounds your child makes. Imitate other interesting sounds that the child hears: for example, trains, cars, the telephone, animal sounds.

Play with objects your child shows an interest in: for example, spoons, blocks, boxes.

THE CHILD WHO USES TWO WORD SENTENCES

I. Your Child's Language

In this stage, your child will understand most words you use to name familiar objects, and actions, and he will say some of these same words in two-word sentences. He may answer some simple yes/no questions correctly, e.g., "Are you hungry?". He is able to describe an event that has just happened, e.g., when he finishes a cookie, he may say "cookie allgone". He is likely to use the same sentences to mean several different things. For example, "Daddy car" may mean "That is Daddy's car" or "Daddy is in the car". Your child will ask you for the names of objects by pointing or by saying "What that?". You will be able to understand quite a bit of what your child says, although there are many speech sounds he is not able to produce correctly yet.

II. What You Should Talk About

Talk about household objects and toys that you and/or your child are looking at or using. Your child will be most interested in speech about objects or toys that he is directly involved with.

Talk about activities that you and your child are doing at the moment: for example, "Mommy is washing the dishes".

Talk about activities you have just finished or are about to do: for example, "We are going for a ride in the car."

Talk about familiar people and family members, using their names as well as pronouns such as "I", "you", and "me".

Talk about <u>where</u> people and objects are located and <u>to whom</u> objects and toys belong: for example, "You are in the chair" and "That's Mommy's shoe".

Describe how you and your child are feeling, physically and emotionally: for example, "You're feeling tired and fussy" and "Daddy loves you".

Talk about whatever your child begins to talk about. It shows him that you are listening, interested, and that you understand what he is saying. Talk about

his topic until he is no longer interested or until he brings up something new. For example:

Child: (pointing to dog outside): "What that"?

Mother: "That is a dog".

Child: "Bow-wow".

Mother: "Yes, the dog says 'bow-wow'".

Child: "Allgone".

Mother: "The dog is running away. Bye-bye doggie".

Child: (pointing to truck outside): "Mommy see".

Mother: "Oh, there's a big truck".

III. HOW YOU SHOULD TALK

Talk in short, complete sentences. When your child says a two-word sentence, repeat his words in a complete sentence. You are not correcting him, but simply saying his sentence in a more complete form: for example,

Child: "Jenny cookie".

Mother: "Yes, that's Jenny's cookie".

Vary your sentences frequently to include descriptions, statements, and commands: for example, "That is a doggie", "It's a big doggie", "Look at the doggie".

Ask simple yes/no questons and questions about the names, locations, and actions of familiar people and objects: for example, "Do you want to go?"; "What is that?" (as you point at an object): "Where is Daddy?"; "What is the doggie doing?".

Give your child time to think about what you say and to respond to your statements, questions and commands. Look for hints that he does not understand: for example, he doesn't answer; he answers you incorrectly; he looks puzzled or confused; or he asks you to repeat by saying "Huh?" or "What?".

If you repeat what you said and your child still not respond, you should give him the appropriate answer.

Speak at a slower rate than you do to adults, and stress important words in your sentences: for example, "Do you want to eat"?

Provide new words to go along with words your child already uses, for example:

Child: "Want Drink".

Mother: "Do you want milk or hot chocolate"?

When providing new words, give your child other hints to help him understand what you have said: for example, look at or point out the object or person you are naming.

Use new words frequently in different situations to help your child learn these words: for example, "Drink your milk."; "Let's buy some milk"; "You want more milk on your cereal"?

IV. Suggested Activities

Talk to your child as you carry out your daily routines: for example, talk about washing the dishes, talk about things in the grocery store; talk about things you see as you ride in the car.

Spend some time talking with your child when no one else is around and there are few distractions: for example, the two of you could look at and talk about a picture book.

Play action games such as "Ring around the Rosee" and "Hide and Seek".

Play some pretend games where you pretend to do familiar things like sleeping, eating, and talking on the telephone; pretend to be different animals and make the noises they make. Encourage your child to play these pretend games with you.

THE CHILD WHO USES THREE TO FOUR WORD SENTENCES

I. Your Child's Language

In this stage, your child talks more and initiates conversations more frequently. His vocabulary is larger and he produces a variety of three to four word (and sometimes longer) sentences, including questions, statements, and commands. He is better able to talk about the recent past, e.g., "I saw Sesame today", and to anticipate his sequence of daily acitivities, e.g., "I gonna eat soon". He can talk about objects that belong to himself and others, e.g., "my car" and "Daddy's keys". He talks about one object and more than one object, e.g., "cookie" and "cookies". He can say many more speech sounds correctly, although there are still some sounds he has trouble with, especially in longer words.

II. What You Should Talk About

Talk about your child's daily routine, emphasizing the order in which events occur: for example, waking up, getting washed and dressed, eating breakfast.

Talk about the relationship between two events in time: for example, "Daddy's home, soon we'll eat dinner"; or "You had your nap, now we can play".

Help your child group things together and talk about category names like foods, toys, animals. Give him words for specific things that belong in each of these categories.

Talk about important events involving other people in your child's life: for example, "Grandma is coming to visit us tomorrow".; "Today is Daddy's birthday".

Talk about familiar and unfamiliar objects that are present in the situation or room, and about familiar objects which are not present: for example, "See the new truck I bought you"; "Go get your shoes" (which are in child's room).

Talk about how you commonly use objects everyday: for example, "You eat cereal with a spoon".

When talking about objects, include a simple description of them. This gives your child the words he

will need to be able to describe and differentiate among objects. Use words for color, shape, size, number (cat, two cats), location (in, on, down) and possession (Mommy's, mine, yours, etc.) It is best to talk about only one of these characteristics at a time, so your child doesn't get confused.

Talk about your emotions and your child's emotions; for example, "Are you feeling sad"? Tell me about it".

II. How You Should Talk

Talk in complete sentences which will serve as a speech model to help your child learn about language. Don't expect him to use all the words you do - he is still learning.

Allow enough time between your statements, commands, and questions for your child to answer or carry out the requested action.

If it seems your child did not understand what you said, you can do one of the following:

- -Rephrase or repeat your statement, question or command.
- -Change your original sentence so that he can make a simple choice: for example, if he doesn't understand "What shirt do you want to wear?", you might say, "Do you want to wear the red shirt or the blue shirt"? (pointing to each as you name it).
- -Provide more verbal cues: for example, if your child does not respond to "Let's go to the playground", you might say "Let's go play on the swings and the slide".

Listen and respond to what your child is saying rather than how he is saying it; for example:

Child: "Me eated the cookies".

Father: "You sure did. They must have been good".

Allow your child time to fully express himself. Let him know that what he says is of importance to you by responding either verbally or with action.

Encourage your child to start conversations. You may find that he often asks questions to open a conversa-

tion. Always respond to his questions. If you feel he is asking lots of questions he knows the answer to, you can respond to his questions with a question, for example:

Child: "Where's Mommy"?

Father:"Where is Mommy"?

Child: "At a meeting".

These types of question exchanges can become a game which your child enjoys playing; he's learning that speech can be fun.

IV. Suggested Activities

Read books containing simple stories and lots of action pictures. You may want to tell the story in your own words. Have your child name pictures and actions and encourage him to tell part of the story from the pictures.

Make a scrapbook of old pictures or magazine pictures and talk with your child about what's going on in the pictures.

Talk about the activities and sequence of events found in familiar comic strips such as Peanuts and Family Circus.

Have your child draw, paint, color, or model clay and tell you about what he has made.

Sing songs and recite nursery rhymes with your child.

Play simple counting games: for example, count the blocks as your child stacks them. Count fingers and toes.

Play simple sorting games. Help your child sort objects into groups which differ only in 1 way (for example: color or shape or size).

Do simple household tasks together (e.g. putting silverware on the table) and talk about actions and objects.

Play "Problem Solving" games. Ask simple questions which lead to the solution to the problem. (For

example: "Where do we put the milk"? Provide your own answer if necessary. (e.g. The milk goes in the refrigerator).

THE CHILD WHO SAYS SENTENCES THAT ARE LONGER THAN FOUR WORDS

I. Your Child's Language

Your child is now putting more than four words together to make sentences. His speech sounds are quite adult-like in some ways. He is beginning to combine two ideas in one sentence, e.g., "I runned and I jumped". His vocabulary is larger and is continuing to grow as he adds new words to talk about his world.

Sometimes you may hear your child use speech that an adult would not use. For example, he may say "runned" and "foots" for "ran" and "feet". All children seem to go through a stage where they do this. Your child's speech is easier to understand than when he was younger, but he may continue to have difficulty with some sounds.

Your child understands more than he can say, although he may not fully understand everything he hears. Sometimes, when he doesn't understand, he may say "huh?" or "What?" Other times, he may go ahead and answer even though his answer isn't quite appropriate. He may ask many questions about your statements and commands, e.g., he may ask "why" whenever you tell him to do something or whenever you try to explain things to him.

II. What You Should Talk About

Talk about experiences or events that happened in the recent past (for example; this morning, yesterday or last week) or that will occur in the near future (for example; that afternoon, tomorrow, or next week).

Call attention to time-related daily activities. Your child needs to learn that there are activities related to different times of the day: for example: "It's getting dark. Time to get ready for bed".

Talk about the location of people and objects using words like "beside", "in front of", behind", "over".

Talk about how things are the same and different. You can do this by comparing their function, size, shape, and color. It is best to concentrate on only one or two of these characteristics at a time, for example:

Mother (as child plays with blocks). "This block is blue. Here is a green block. They are not the same, are they? One is green and one is blue".

Discuss people's feelings and emotions and reasons for them: for example, "Your sister is crying because she lost her new doll. She's feeling very sad".

Talk about why things happen: for example, "You pushed the blocks so they fell down".

III. How You Should Talk

Ask your child a variety of questions about familiar objects, people, and activities, including such questions as why, how, how many, how much, and when.

If your child does not answer a question, you can:
-Ask for the same information in a different way, for example:

Mother: "When did Suzie come home"?

Child: "Yup she came home".

Mother: "Did Suzie come home before dinner"?

Child: "No, after dinner".

-Provide more verbal clues, for example:

Mother: "Where's the hammer"?

(child doesn't respond and looks puzzled)

Mother: "Where's the thing to pound nails with"?

Child: "On the table".

Answer your child's questions since they are his way of initiating and/or controlling conversation and of getting information. Sometimes you may want to help him discover the answer himself, for example:

Child: "I wanna go to the park".

Parent: "Not now".

Child: "Why"?

Parent: "Go over to the window and look outside. See the big black clouds".

Child: "Yes".

Parent: "Those clouds tell you something. Do you know what"?

Child: "It's gonna rain".

Parent: "That's right. Very good. We'll have to wait for some sunshine to go to the park".

Use simple sentences when instructing your child what to do; for example, say "Wash your hands before we eat" rather than "We will have our dinner after you've washed your hands".

Use longer sentences when you're not giving instructions, because your child's ability to understand and remember is improving, and he can handle longer, slightly more complicated sentences: for example, say "This is the kind of ball that you sit on" instead of "Here's a big ball. You can sit on it".

Speak slowly enough to give your child time to understand your message and to organize his answers.

To encourage better listening in your child, set a good example. Let him see that there's a time to talk and a time to listen and that a good listener is courteous and waits until the speaker finishes before he begins talking. Dinner table conversation when everyone takes turns talking is a good place to encourage good listening skills in your child.

If your child begins a conversation, continue to talk with him about that topic until he seems to lose interest in it.

Show your child that you value his ideas by using his suggestions and by telling others about his ideas

and suggestions: for example, "Annie thought of a new place to keep her books".

IV. Suggested Activities

Involve your child in daily routine activities and use these activities as a basis for conversations. Solicit your child's suggestions and advice for ways to do things.

Go on special outings as a family and use these outings to talk about the past and the future: for example, plan a picnic or an ice skating outing and before you go, talk about where you'll be going and what you'll be seeing. After the outing, talk about where you went and what you did. You may sometimes want to use photographs from these outings when you talk about it later.

Spend some time alone with your child talking about things of interest to both of you. It's important to have some conversational times together without other distractions. Sit down in place where the two of you can be comfortable and relaxed and enjoy yourselves. Look at your child when he's talking to you.

Let your child choose books he likes and read them to him. A library card of his own and frequent trips to the library will stimulate his interest in books. Encourage him to tell part of the story from the pictures, especially if you are rereading the story.

Make up stories about your child when he was little. Children love stories in which they are the main character.

Use rhymes, riddles, and songs to teach your child that speech is fun. Children at this stage of language development particularly enjoy simple riddles and jokes.